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INFO RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE 1782

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 002793

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y. CHANGED SENSITIVE CAPTION
TO SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FTC PASS FOR JOHN PAISI

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TPHY](#) [OTRA](#) [KSCA](#) [NSF](#) [IT](#)
SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR FTC - WILLIAM E.
KOVACIC OCTOBER 12-15, 2006

REF: STATE 165362

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1. Embassy Rome welcomes and grants country clearance for FTC official Mr. William E. Kovacic to travel to Florence for the period of October 12 - 15, 2006 to speak at the 10th Annual Competition Conference at the European University Institute, Fiesole.

2. Per reftel, Embassy understands that no assistance is required. However, if any help is required, the Embassy's duty officer may be reached at any time day or night at (39) 06-4674-1.

3. Security/Threat Assessment:
Due to many factors, including the ongoing global war on terrorism, American diplomatic facilities in Italy operate under a state of heightened security. Travelers are advised to refer to the Public Announcement issued by the Department of State on March 21, 2006 which is in effect until June 19, 2006.

The July 2005 bombings in London have resulted in additional attention to security. Travelers should continue to monitor public announcements regarding worldwide caution. There have been several high-profile arrests in Italy of alleged terrorists with links to Al-Qaeda. Several groups, including the Red Brigades, who flourished in Italy during the late seventies and early eighties, and later the Autonomists, have claimed responsibility for violent crimes in the past. Members are mostly radical students and disruptive youths.

There have been sporadic demonstrations, usually of a political nature, some with anti-war and anti-American themes, demanding the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq. Although most of these demonstrations have been peaceful, they often cause traffic congestion, which is already very heavy in city centers. Workers' strikes can also affect transportation, and are sometimes called with as little as 24 hours notice. These strikes often result in the cancellation of local airline flights, and disruptions in local train, bus and metro operations.

We monitor the security environment closely and issue updated assessments as warranted. While there is presently no information available that indicates targeting of a specific individual, all visitors and resident USG personnel are encouraged to maintain a heightened state of security awareness. Travelers should maintain a low profile; stay alert for unusual activity, and avoid repetitious patterns and habits by varying routes and times of departures and

arrivals. Visitors to U.S. diplomatic and military facilities should be aware that increased security measures are in effect at these locations. Unusual or suspicious incidents should be reported immediately to the RSO.

Street crime occurs frequently, especially in large cities and at tourist locations. Visitors are warned to safeguard their valuables at all times, especially while walking along streets and when using public transportation. Extra care should be taken while in crowded tourist areas. Pickpocketing and purse snatching occurs regularly, and tourists are often targeted. Traveling on the Autostrada throughout Italy can be hazardous. Rest stops are often hangouts for thieves.

The sale of counterfeit merchandise in Italy is widespread and visitors should avoid buying goods from non-licensed vendors or vendors whom they suspect are selling fake products. To combat the sale of counterfeit CDs and bags, the Municipality of Florence and other cities have adopted a policy to strictly enforce a law that imposes high fines (from 3,300 to 10,000 Euros) on those purchasing or accepting counterfeit goods.

Privately-owned laptops and personal computers are prohibited in all classified facilities. Cellular telephones and palm pilots are not permitted in CAA areas. Travelers with USG-owned unclassified laptop or notebook computers, peripherals, diskettes or tapes must obtain RSO/IMO authorization for access. USG-owned classified computers must arrive at post via classified diplomatic pouch. Questions concerning other types of electronic devices and magnetic media should be directed to the IMO or RSO.

Money Exchange

The unit of currency throughout Italy is the Euro. Dollars or travelers checks can be legally exchanged for Euros at local exchange offices, hotels and the airport. A bank, which is located in the Embassy, can cash checks for dollars

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or Euros only for official travelers. Most major credit cards are accepted throughout Italy. ATM machines, including one in the Embassy, will accept many U.S. Bank cards.

Please be advised that there has been a noted increase in the appearance of "skimming devices" on ATM machines in Italy. The devices are attached to ATM machines and are able to capture account information stored on an ATM card's magnetic strip. Along with the card reader and pin-hole video camera, which is normally mounted over the keypad to record the pin number entered, criminals are able to access the account. Travelers should use ATM machines that are inside secured banks/businesses, and are in well-lit areas. The keypad should be covered with one hand as you enter your PIN code. Avoid ATM machines that show evidence of tampering or other irregularities.

Visa Requirements

Italian visas are not required for TDY stays of less than 90 days for holders of diplomatic, official or tourist passports.

For further information regarding travel in Italy, consult the Department of State's Consular Information Sheet <http://www.travel.state.gov/italy.html> or Embassy Rome's Internet site on travel in Italy <http://www.usembassy.it/usa/>
SPOGLI